



LEFT: Congressman Gutknecht holds a press conference to speak about his prescription drug legislation.

RIGHT: Congressman Gutknecht talks about the future of rural telecommunications after a forum with industry experts.

Congressman Gil Gutknecht
First District, Minnesota

MIDYEAR REPORT

Dear Friends,

The first half of the year has been a whirlwind. It began with the pomp of a Presidential Inauguration. It has included trade and economic talks with the leaders of Germany and other EU countries, a visit with a trade delegation from Taiwan and many discussions with diverse groups concerning the Central American Free Trade Agreement.

The following pages give a brief summary of some of the important issues in Washington and big stories in southern Minnesota. I hope you'll review the information and, as always, contact my office with questions or concerns.

With warmest regards,



TOP: Congressman Gutknecht talks about the War on Terror with several National Guard units.



BOTTOM: Congressman Gutknecht signs a USDA Rural Development grant check for Jasper Community Ambulance.

2005

Pharmaceutical Market Access Act of 2005

For too long, American consumers have been held captive in a market that forces them to pay significantly more for the same prescription drugs as our friends in Canada and Europe. By opening markets, American consumers could save billions of dollars.

My bill (HR 328) would allow American consumers access to FDA-approved prescription drugs from FDA-approved facilities in 25 industrialized countries. The language requires tamper-resistant packaging and chain of custody protection for any imported prescription drugs marketed in the United States.

Rural Telecom

As Co-Chairman of the Congressional Rural Caucus (CRC) Telecommunication Task Force, I convened three forums to discuss the future of rural telecommunications as Congress prepares to re-examine the Telecommunications Act of 1996. The CRC consists of more than 140 bipartisan Members of Congress.

Embryonic Stem Cell Research

I voted 'no' on the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2005 (HR 810). The measure would allow federal taxpayer dollars to be used for embryonic stem cell research. Adult stem cells and those taken from umbilical cord blood have already been used to develop potential treatments for at least 58 human maladies. However, I believe using living human embryos for medical experiments creates an ethical and moral dilemma.

“OUR STAFF WORKS BY A SIMPLE MODEL, ‘LISTEN, LEARN, HELP AND LEAD.’”

-Congressman Gil Gutknecht



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Energy

I supported the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (HR 6). This bill will serve as a national energy strategy to reduce dependency on foreign oil by utilizing domestic and renewable resources.

As American consumers pay record prices at the pump, it becomes more important that we reduce dependency on Middle East oil. The measure includes a renewable fuels standard that will require five billion gallons per year of ethanol and biodiesel to be used in our fuel by 2012. It is estimated this provision alone will help create 214,000 new jobs and expand household income by \$51.7 billion over the next decade.

National Guard and Reserves

The 2006 National Defense Authorization Act (HR 1815) improves health care, pay, housing and support systems for our Reserve, National Guard and their families. The measure extends TRICARE health coverage, increases the reserve affiliation bonus to \$15,000 and implements a program to improve family support programs.

“IT’S BEEN A GOOD YEAR FOR THE FIRST DISTRICT. A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT PROJECTS ARE MOVING FORWARD AND THE PEOPLE CONTINUE TO PRODUCE NEW AND FASCINATING TECHNOLOGY TO LEAD US INTO THE FUTURE.”
-Congressman Gil Gutknecht

AROUND THE DISTRICT

LEFT: Congressman Gutknecht speaks about Windom’s new community communications service at the grand opening of WindomNet.

RIGHT: Congressman Gutknecht discusses HSAs with forum participants in Owatonna.



TOP: Congressman Gutknecht hosts First District students selected for the U.S. Service Academies.

BOTTOM: Congressman Gutknecht presents a check to the Red Rock Rural Water System.



Northstar Ethanol Plant

The First District continued its rich tradition of renewable energy leadership with the grand opening of the Northstar Ethanol Plant in Lake Crystal. From ethanol to biodiesel to wind, renewable energy not only offers us a chance to reduce our dependency on foreign oil, but also provides economic opportunities for our district.

WindomNet

I was honored to participate and speak during the ribbon cutting for “WindomNet.” The City of Windom offers a new community-owned and operated network that provides residents with high-speed video, voice and data access.

Bioscience Tour

I hosted representatives of the National Institutes of Health, National Cancer Institute and USDA for a bioscience tour of the First District. The tour made stops in Rochester, Austin and Worthington to visit with local organizations about their ongoing work related to bioscience research, animal virus tracking and cancer prevention.

Health Savings Accounts

I hosted a forum in Owatonna to discuss health savings accounts (HSAs). HSAs give workers the opportunity to save tax-free dollars for routine medical expenses. They also afford the security of insurance should workers face major illness and the freedom to take their accounts with them if they change jobs. These accounts can reduce annual health insurance premiums for families by thousands of dollars while giving them control over their own health care. The forum offered constituents the opportunity to hear from representatives of the health care and business fields, and the chance to learn more about how HSAs could help their families.

Service Academy Nominations

I was honored to nominate the best and brightest young people from the First District to our United States Air Force, Merchant Marine, Military and Naval Academies. These southern Minnesota students will start classes this fall. This is a testament to the caliber of young people in our part of the world.

Lewis & Clark Rural Water System

I supported the Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act (HR 2419). The measure included \$15 million for the Lewis & Clark Rural Water System. The water system will cover an area of 5,000 square miles in southwest Minnesota, northwest Iowa and southeast South Dakota – serving a population of more than 200,000 people.

EMP on the Mississippi River

The Energy and Water bill also included \$33.5 million for the Environmental Management Program (EMP) on the Mississippi River. EMP is a federal-state partnership that monitors the natural resources of the upper Mississippi River. It is instrumental in restoring natural ecosystems and preserving navigation routes.

Jasper Community Ambulance

USDA State Rural Development Director Steve Wenzel and I presented a \$50,000 check to Jasper Community Ambulance to help purchase a new ambulance and other emergency equipment. Jasper is among a number of First District communities that received first responder assistance.

Transportation

I supported the Transportation Equity Act (HR 3). This comprehensive bill – intended for highway maintenance and construction projects – authorized the First District \$16 million for high priority projects: \$14 million for Highway 14 and \$2 million to add grade separation at Huff Street in Winona.

Red Rock Rural Water System

The United States Department of Agriculture, through the Rural Development office, awarded a \$1.9 million grant and a \$5 million low interest loan to Red Rock Rural Water for an expansion project. The project will add 460 users, a treatment plant and a water tower in Cottonwood County.

VISIT GIL’S WEB SITE AT WWW.GIL.HOUSE.GOV TO SIGN UP FOR HIS ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER AND TO FIND STATION TIMES AND DETAILS FOR HIS WEEKLY RADIO SHOWS.